

Approved

Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee Public Hearing
Minutes of
February 6, 2014

Budcom Members Present: Elyse Seeley (Chair), Bill Faria, John Lyon, Malcolm Allison.

Absent and excused: Krista Steger, Bob Mantegari, Jeff Bryan (Selectmen), Dianne Vosgien (School Board Representative),

Budget Committee Chairperson Elyse Seeley called the hearing to order at 7:00 pm.

Elyse advised the public present that this hearing is informational only, no votes will be taken but we will answer any questions. The Hearing is for the 2014 Town Budget and the 2014-2015 Swasey School Budget. Handouts on all budgets were provided.

Presentation Summary:

Our tax bills are composed of the Town Operating budget, Town Warrant Articles, Swasey School Operating budget, and Warrant Articles, and Exeter District Cooperative School Operating budget and Warrant Articles for the high school and middle school. Our Budget Committee works on the Town and Swasey School budgets only.

The Town Operating budget is proposed as \$3,046,926.00. The operating budget alone is a 6.46% increase but because there is a decrease in proposed Warrant Articles over last year's, there is a net 3.84% increase.

The Budcom Chair outlined the budget process beginning with the process of determining the various Department budgets. The Selectmen approved a 2% COLA for all town employees. In addition, this is the first year with a completed standard evaluation process and some employees were given merit increases on top of the COLA. For some town employees this is the first increase in several years. Almost all budgets are up due to personnel wages and benefits changes. In addition, there is an increase in the town's Legal line due to several ongoing court cases, with a noticeable increase in that budget. The State requires 100% town property assessment/re-evaluation to occur in 2015, and the costs associated with this process are split between 2014 and 2015 to minimize the impact on one budget year.

The Budcom recommended town Warrant Articles represent a \$50,000.00 decrease in costs, with no new requests. Budcom voted to NOT Recommend a new Fire Department Warrant Article requesting commitment to a lease-purchased Fire Apparatus. The Fire Department WA seeks the town's approval of a five-year lease purchase agreement beginning in 2015. Fire Department Chief Kevin Lemoine was present to provide an overview of both this Warrant Article and the schedule he proposes for Fire Dept vehicle replacement. The Selectmen Recommend this Warrant Article.

Resident Roy Nealin asked about the maintenance and age of the fire vehicles, and the replacement details. The Chief explained that because of the weight of the filled tanks the wear and tear is accelerated and wears the springs, frame etc. much quicker than a normal diesel vehicle. Roy stated that the tax burden is becoming harder and harder to accept not only for himself but for many people in town.

Malcolm Allison asked the reason for the request for a Quint style vehicle and the rationale behind this type of vehicle. Also, would the replacement schedule pursue dual purpose vehicles in the future? The Chief explained that the ladder truck can be used not merely as a ladder but more likely as a rescue apparatus. All the vehicles currently have ground ladders but the new vehicle will have the ladder attached to the truck as well as ground ladders. The truck is also as maneuverable as the other trucks in the fleet (approximately 33 feet long). The Chief explained that more details are in the current issue of the Brentwood Newsletter.

Resident Amy Brown questioned the large increase in the Fire Department budget this year. The Chief explained that the increase is primarily due to personnel costs. The Fire Department rehired a full time employee and the additional costs were salary, insurance and retirement benefits expenses.

The Town Warrant Articles were outlined and explained. There are also two Citizens' Petitions: one to vote to support a constitutional amendment to regulate political spending and clarify constitutional rights; the other related to tax exemptions related to renewable energy. There is also a Citizen's Petition to adopt SB2 ballot voting as a form of government for the Town.

There were no further questions on the Town budgets.

Swasey School's Operating budget is proposed at \$5,455,102.00. This is for support of Swasey School, the current salaries and benefits and any statutory obligations. The operating budget is up 5.38%, primarily due to Special Education out-of-district costs.

There is a Warrant Article to approve the costs associated with a new Collective Bargaining agreement (teacher contract) which calls for an increase in \$43,877.00 for the 2014-2015 school year, and additional costs in the two years to follow. The contract represents a 2.3% increase in salaries as well as steps and retirement stipends. The Budget Committee recommends both of the above.

In addition there is a new Warrant Article to expand the current ½ day Kindergarten to a full day kindergarten program, represented by an initial cost of \$120,000.00 (teacher, teaching assistant, furnishings and supplies). The Budget Committee voted to NOT Recommend this Warrant Article.

Resident Jane Duarte asked what happened to the original request of \$30,000.00 associated with this proposal and Elyse explained that the School Board revised the expenses to reflect the true cost associated with full day kindergarten.

The Swasey School District meeting will be held on March 8th, 2014 at 9am at Swasey School to vote on their proposed expenses. The School Board will be available to answer questions and provide more detail on the Swasey School budget and warrant articles.

Town Meeting is scheduled for March 15th, 2014, also at Swasey School at 9am. Town Meeting is a continuation of the Town Elections to be held on March 11th, 2014.

For informational purposes, the Exeter Region Cooperative (SAU 16) School Budget of approximately \$54,000.000.00 was highlighted. The SAU16 deliberative session is also being held tonight at the Exeter High School. These expenses will be voted on by ballot, as SB-2 on election day, March 11. These expenses have a much greater impact on our tax bill increases.

A chart was provided to outline the proposed Brentwood Tax Impacts, and the changes from last year's tax impact. The chart includes Town, Swasey School and the ERCSD Coop School budgets.

All the information reviewed at the Public Hearing is also posted on the Budget Committee page of the Town of Brentwood website.

Note that Selectmen representatives and the Town Administrator present advised that the Bridge Repair Warrant Article #10 is likely to be reworded to specify bridge repair for Crawley Falls, this so we can apply for a state grant to fund a large portion of the repair. Elyse noted that the change will require another consideration and vote from Budget Committee. We will schedule a meeting on Feb 10th at 7PM. She will post this meeting.

The Official Budget hearing was adjourned at 8:06 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by William C Faria